

THE BELLTOWER²⁰⁰⁷



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About the title:

Just as the Bell Tower at Tyler Junior College chimes on the quarter hour to mark the passage of time, it reminds students of the harmony which surrounds them in their educational pursuits. Music, dance, theatre, art, athletics, and academics blend to make Tyler Junior College a beacon to the community, the state, and the world at large. As the echoes of the chords filter through the oaks, their vibrations tremble far beyond the confines of the brick archways and winding walks where students gather. Tyler Junior College is a lofty tower of educational opportunity for students who have come from all parts of the world. The Bell Tower Arts Journal proudly hails the accomplishments of its hallowed halls and beckons those who would seek both its traditions and the promise of tomorrow.

~Judith Bateman, 2006



The Bell Tower Arts Journal

Volume 1 | 2006 - 2007

Editor

Linda Gary, Ph. D.

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The editorial board for the journal is comprised of full-time faculty members from the English Department, the Graphic Arts Department, and the Fine Arts Department. The editorial board has the final approval on all selections and publication decisions.

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Editorial Policy:

The Bell Tower Arts Journal is sponsored by the Psi Gamma Chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society. We accept submissions of poetry, short fiction, non-fiction essays, photography, and fine and graphic art by current Tyler Junior College students. We accept submissions for consideration only during the fall semester each year for possible publication in the subsequent spring semester. The Bell Tower Arts Journal is entirely student generated and seeks to provide a publishing venue for the rich artistic expression of TJC students.

Our goal is to create a publication that is a high quality, content-rich source of literary and artistic expression on a wide range of topics and themes. Therefore, we seek unique, insightful work that displays vivid, lively language and artistic skill.

All submissions must be the original work of the student writer or artist who submits it for consideration or publication. We do not accept previously published or plagiarized work. Every attempt is made by the editor to assure originality, and all literary pieces will be submitted to turnitin.com for an originality report. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of each student to submit only his or her own literary and artistic work.

Moreover, while we strongly support intellectual freedom as the right of every individual from all points of view, we do not accept work deemed pornographic, profane, exploitative, or that seeks to cause injury to an individual or group.

Tyler Junior College gives equal consideration to all applicants for admission, employment, and participation in its programs and activities without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, or veteran status.

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Quietness

Matt Morgan | Sophomore | Tyler | Digital Photo 8" x 10"



End of Summer

Jessica McIntyre | Freshman | Tyler | Digital Photo 8" x 10"

Free the Ghost

Sheila Sulser | Sophomore | Mineola

The voices, they surround me,
Echoing in a distant roar.
I drift through space, floating free,
Away to that place, I soar.

The sun and breeze on my face,
Whispering winds, entice.
The trees dance and sway with grace;
I've been here more than twice.

The rippling image is clear
In the cleansing-wash of the waves.
There's time to reflect the year,
The serenity my soul craves.

Mind and soul lost in space,
So sweetly the spirit floats.
I'll keep returning to this place,
Just to free the ghost.

Moms and Pops

Brian C. Keese | Freshman | Tyler

Little bobbing ball of hope,
Watching you drift from here to there
Pops placed you oh so carefully
And now is sipping his ice-cold beer

Set on task with all of my cousins,
Some of which have given up
And now instead are laughing and running
Suddenly, I hear kerplop!

Now at last the battle rages,
Tension mounting from the tug and lurch
To Pops I bring my prize still squirming,
An impressive four-and-a-half ounce perch

With pride I smile at my grandfather;
Pops ruffles my hair and declares me a winner.
Inside to Moms my catch is taken;
She cleans, prepares, and cooks – chicken for dinner.

Memorial

Angela Lee Weiss | Sophomore | Frankston

The path from my house up the driveway puffs dusty, dry clouds around my feet and becomes seriously hot by the time I reach his barbed-wire fence a quarter mile away. I cross over the top of a grassy knoll where his house sits, then drop down to water level, and when I reach the tall trees, the shade gives relief. In the early part of the day, steamy vapors rise from the damp earth and sluggish water, and in the heat of the day, everything seen vibrates and shimmers through the hot air.

The cicadas sounded better to us than music and to glimpse the egret or heron flapping through the tree branches held our interest much more than television. This swamp welcomed and comforted us like nothing else. For Gilbert and me, the place provided a metaphysical escape from the woes and dread of other people. The peacefulness soaked into our wounded souls from the natural things, the created things. This hand-hewn park captured more than beauty, enhanced by wild creatures. The taming of the overgrown wildness healed our spirits.

More than two decades ago, I followed this path on horseback for the first time. My Arabian refused to jump the water, and while I fought with him, suddenly Gilbert appeared just amazed to see anyone in his swamp, let alone a woman on an angry white horse. After neighborly introductions, the gelding and I departed, leaving a horseshoe behind. Gilbert placed it on the branch of a young tree, and it hangs there to this day, although much higher than I can reach anymore.

Over the years he showed me where the bald eagle nested and the beaver built their lodges. Breaking up their dams and pushing them farther back into the swamp because he wanted the water to flow faster, he planned to create streams from each spring he found. He started with trenches dug one shovel deep and two wide. Miles of ditches had washed out the sand and cut deeper and deeper until the creeks ran ten-feet wide and four to six-feet deep. He even suggested we put my Jon boat in there, and we did one day, paddling deep into the marsh to fish.

He piled the mud that he removed from the ditches alongside each branch of the stream and built up the paths. I barely kept up with his limping gait as we explored one end of that wetland to the other. Once, as I followed closely behind, he surprised me by reaching with his left hand inside his holster for the revolver on the right hip and pointed it as I looked over his shoulder straight down to his trigger finger. After he fired, he squinted and wondered aloud about his shot. I assured him that the water moccasin, that I never saw before he fired, jumped straight up about three feet in an explosion of water and then disappeared in a blood-stained pool. "Another one bites the dust," he said.

Today, I enter the shade where a huge spring, measuring four-feet wide and yawning at the bottom of a good-sized pool, gushes water that is headed for Lake Palestine. I remember gathering water plants here—parrot grass, wild water cress and others for the pond that I built in my back yard. The wet moss and mud sucks at my boots as the night singing tree frogs grow quiet and give way to the buzzing insects of day. The sun climbs quickly, casting the best light of the day on this picture perfect place in my heart. I miss hearing the hollow sound of his axe striking the dead wood that guides me to where he worked. The swamp sounds all around with mallards now that swim and feed unaware of my existence. The wetlands flood again because Gilbert will not break up the beaver dams anymore. He left these woods not long ago and will not return, but I remember his presence still and miss him.



Leaf Abstract

April C. Arms | Freshman | Flint | Digital Photo 8" x 10"



Looking Down

Brandie Covington | Freshman | Tyler | Digital Photo 8" x 10"

The Shadow of a Mother

Amber Lowe | Freshman | Mineola

The shadow of her body faded into the far reaches of my mind. The call that morning told my grandmother and me that my mother was going to come pick me up that night. I was so excited my insides were shaking all over; just the sheer thought of getting to see her made my heart explode with happiness. This was the day, I kept telling myself, that I had waited for all week. I was turning seven that weekend, and we --just the two of us--were going to spend the entire weekend together.

"So you are coming today, Mommy?" I asked with all the excitement in the world spilling out of my mouth.

"Yes, Sweetie, I am. I will be there at six this evening. Okay? I can't wait to see you!" She told me these words over the telephone. It had been two weeks since I had seen her last. I gave the telephone to my grandmother and rushed to my room as quickly as possible to get ready for school. My small, black radio was blaring with music as I got myself dressed for school. I turned my radio off as soon as I was dressed and followed the sweet aroma of my grandmother's cooking. Oh, how I loved her cooking because it warmed me from the inside out every time I took a bite.

"Now, Amber, go to school today and concentrate on just that. Then, when you come home, we can pack your bag, eat some dinner, and wait for your mother to arrive." My grandmother said these words with all the love in the world. As my grandmother dropped me off at school that morning, I thought of only one thing: my mommy was coming to get me tonight. We were going to stay up all night watching movies and filling our stomachs with warm, salty popcorn. Oh, how I could not wait until I got out of school. I told all my friends about how I was going to spend all weekend with my mom; all they said to me was that they got to spend all their time with their moms, but I did not care what they thought. My mom, in my mind, was the best mom in the world, no matter what. When the school day finally ended, I spotted the red minivan from a mile away. I ran a one-hundred meter dash all the way until I came in contact with the door.

"Hey, Nana, Mommy is still coming, right? She didn't call and say she wasn't coming, did she?" I was trying to catch my breath as I spoke these words.

"No, Baby. She didn't call." As soon as my grandmother put the van in park in the driveway at home, I bounced out and ran inside directly to my room. I got my pink suitcase out from underneath my bed and started neatly putting my clothes into it. After what seemed like five minutes, which was really thirty, I quietly walked into the kitchen to help my grandmother cook some dinner. My favorite time of the day was when I was able to cook with my grandmother. Nana and I could spend hours and hours on end just cooking and tasting whatever it was we were cooking. By the time we finished, my grandmother and I had the whole house smelling like a bakery. It was wonderful!

At six in the evening, I sat on the couch and looked out the window, seeing nothing. I figured she had gotten lost, but she had been there before, so how could she have gotten lost? Maybe she had something come up, and she would only be a little late. At eight o'clock, I still sat by that cold, damp window, looking out and seeing no sign of movement anywhere. Around eleven that night, my grandmother came and told me that it was late and time for bed.

"No! Mommy told me she was coming to get me. She's just late, that's all. She will come. You watch and see!" I screamed the words.

"Baby, she's not coming tonight. It's too late. Now come to bed. You can sleep with me tonight," she said gently as she lifted me off the couch.

"But, Nana, she told me she was coming tonight. I already have all my clothes in my bag; she has to come!" I said these words as the tears started to streak my face. She wasn't coming, and I knew it at the bottom of my heart.

My mother never showed up that night or on any other night for that matter. That night was the most painful one that I have ever experienced. My seven-year old heart was crushed, and even eleven years later, I can still feel the hurt that my mother caused me that night. My grandmother taught me always to pray to the Lord, and that if I have faith in Him, He will help me put back the pieces of a broken heart. I will always love my mother, and there will always be a place for her in my heart, but until the day I die, I will never forgive her.



Granny's Chair

Rachel Earl Felipe | Sophomore | Manila, Philippines | Digital Photo 8" x 10"

No Turning Back

Sarah Ferrara | Freshman | Bullard

You're standing in place,
Your words hung in the air.
They say they can't trust you,
And you don't think it's fair.
You stand by your words;
Honesty is what you lack.
Then the truth hits you:
There's no turning back.

You're thrown in a chair,
A bottle shoved in your hand.
While everyone else there
Dances and sways with the band.
You take a large swig;
Courage is what you lack.
Then the truth hits you:
There's no turning back.

You're hunched on the floor,
A blue tablet in hand.
Your friend simply whispers,
"It's a trip to la-la-land."
You pop one, then two;
Clarity is what you lack.
Then the truth hits you:
There's no turning back.

You're walking down a hall;
Your man leading the way.
He tells you he loves you—
That it'll all be okay.

You take off your clothes;
Strength is what you lack.
Then the truth hits you:
There's no turning back.

You're still hovering there
Over the body so bold.
You stand and stare
With the gun now cold.
You sit on the floor;
A heart is what you lack.
Then the truth hits you:
There's no turning back.

You're sitting on the floor,
A gun beside your leg.
You cry out about the signs—
How you would plead and beg.
You fire one shot;
Hope is what you lack.
Then the truth hits you:
There's no turning back.

You're standing in front of
God;
Your white robe stained
black.
He tells you he's sorry,
But he can't cut you slack.
You're being led away;
Salvation is what you lack.
Then the truth hits you:
There's no turning back.



Abusive

Rachel Earl Felipe | Sophomore | Manila, Philippines | Acrylic 11" x 14"

In Transit

Luke Clements | Freshman | Tyler

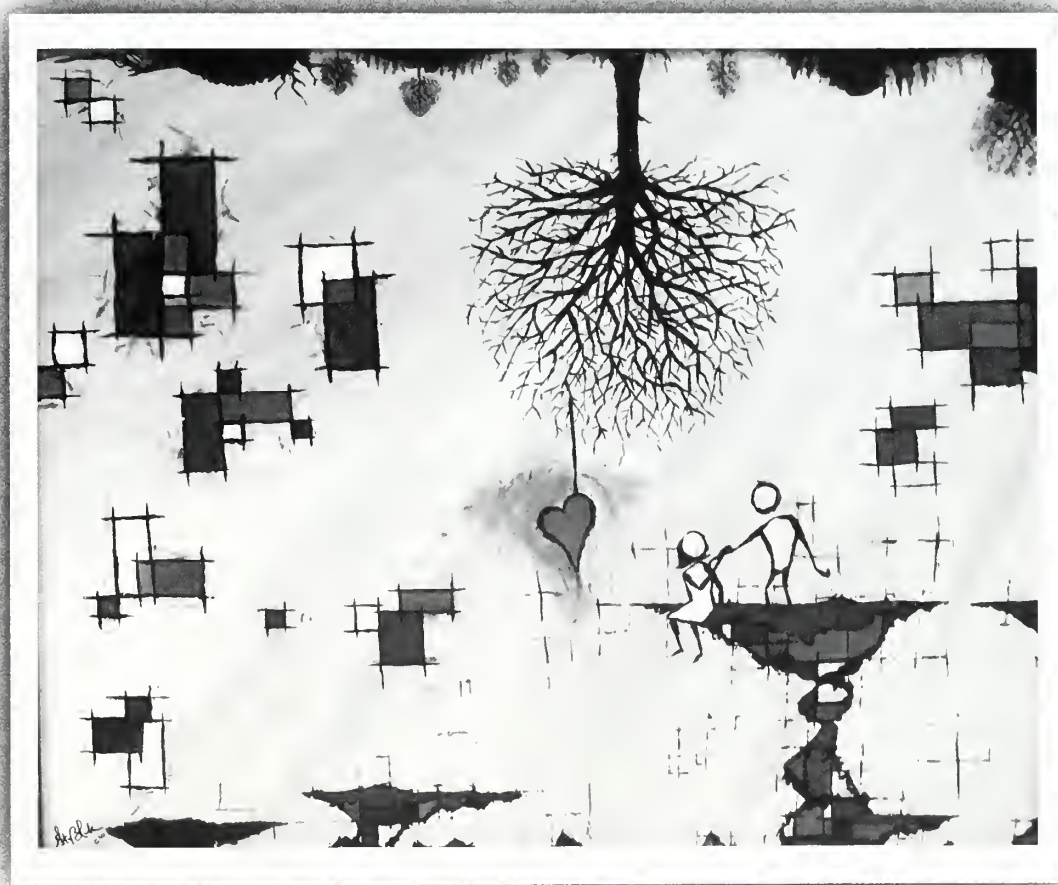
Driving late into the night, the cool green glow of traffic lights is reflected, distorted, and shattered in street side puddles of murky rainwater. Without a stereo - alone - one's attention veers, and drifts, and focuses in. Common occurrences seem uncommon - probably because they're rarely noticed.

The hollow thump and serpentine slither created by tire-tarmac contact as the vessel ascends, crosses, and descends a high, narrow bridge sound like a beating heart, blood-traffic pulsing through its road-veins and highway-arteries, flowing hotly, crimson and sluggish - the lifeblood of civilization.

Sirens wail faintly in the distance, barely noticeable in an otherwise silent night; to the left and right, condensation drapes the windows, blurring the side views; in front a street lamp suddenly fizzles out on its own accord, and overhead a shooting star bisects the night sky - a magical minute moment.

The streets are empty; emptiness fills the city. The world is lifeless; life has been put on pause. The streets are abandoned; abandoned, but not completely. The houses and buildings are closed; closed like the eyes of their inhabitants.

A long stretch of green, grey, and black, the road beckons to be used. Cresting at forty, now fifty, now sixty miles per hour, the world rushes by; It tries desperately to keep up, to be noticed and not to be overlooked - to no avail. There are things to be done, sleep to be slept - no time to waste.



Hanging by a Thread

Garret Blackmon | Freshman | Anaheim, CA | Acrylic 23" x 30"

A Nurse Named *Elroy

Amy Kruzel | Sophomore | Tyler

Nobody understood Shyanne Tender. It hurt to be considered a "problem," a young adolescent with defective emotions. It hurt worse to be a resident in the hospital and never visited by anyone but the nurse. Surrounded by expensive machines that beeped continually, Shyanne had plenty of time to think and reflect on her troubled life. It was depressing as she stared numbly out her window, knowing that outside the cold, white walls of the mental ward teenagers her age were living a normal life.

Talking to herself only helped to congest the empty, filtered air that flowed from the noisy metal vent in the ceiling above the bed. "Nobody cares about me," she mumbled sadly one beautiful afternoon as the cheerful radiance shone through the window. "No one understands how much it hurts."

A knock on the door interrupted the loud solitude of her gloomy thoughts. Shyanne glanced at the closed door in surprise; the nurse wouldn't be around for at least another few hours. A small ray of hope fluttered in her heart. "It's open."

The door opened smoothly but banged against the wall as a little boy in blue scrubs stepped across the threshold. With the poise of a fine waiter, he smiled and held up an old, brown cafeteria tray. "Want some ice cream, Miss Tender?"

Shyanne blinked back tears of disappointment when she saw him. She should have known better than to expect visitors at this time of the day. "No, thank you." Her appetite had disappeared with her hope.

The little boy lowered the tray a few inches. "It's mint chip, your favorite."

"Mint chip?" The taste buds in her mouth perked up at the name. "The real, artificially-flavored stuff?"

"It's not fake," he replied with his face completely serious as he walked over to her bedside. "It has food coloring and everything."

Shyanne smiled for the first time in weeks as she lifted the bowl of ice cream from the tray and dipped the spoon into the bright, green treat. "How did you know mint chip is my favorite flavor?" She placed a spoonful in her mouth and rolled her eyes in ecstasy.

"I don't know; I just guessed." The little boy grinned as Shyanne scooped more ice cream into her mouth. "It's my favorite, too."

Shyanne licked the spoon and scooped out another mouthful. "Thank you so much." With the cold cream in her mouth, she continued to talk. "It's been so long since I've had anything that tasted this good!"

"Can I sit in your chair?" The little boy pointed to the chair near the bedside.

Shyanne nodded, her mouth too full to speak.

The little boy bounced into the chair with a thump, plopping the empty tray on a nearby table. His feet hung over the edge of the seat. "My name's Elroy." He smiled like a boy who had just won a prize at the fair, and his eyes twinkled with an eagerness to absorb the world around him.

"I'm Shyanne."

"Oh, that's pretty." Elroy squinted his face together, thinking the name over for a minute. "Is it like the Cheyenne Indians? Do you write it the same way?"

"I spell it S-H-Y-A-N-N-E."

"You don't look like an Indian."

"I'm not." Shyanne grinned as she thought about her blond hair, green eyes, pale skin, and European heritage.

"I didn't think so." Elroy kicked his suspended feet up and down aimlessly. "Did you know that the Cheyenne Indians are famous because they were really brave in battle?"

"Umhmm."

"Is that why your name's Shyanne?"

Shyanne stopped eating her ice cream as she realized what he was insinuating. "I'm not brave, Elroy."

Elroy tilted his head to one side, looking confident of his opinion. "I think you are."

Shyanne sighed and let the spoon rest in the bowl. "All I want to do is jump out of my bed, yank out the IV, rip the itchy monitor stickers off my sensitive skin, and run out of this room, out of this hospital, and go...somewhere." Picking up the spoon again, Shyanne used it to stab at her ice cream absentmindedly. "A brave person wouldn't run away."

"Then how come you're still here?" Elroy picked at a loose thread sticking out of the chair with his gaze focused intently on Shyanne. "One of the nurses said you put up the biggest fight she's ever seen!" Pride seemed to glisten in his eyes as he imagined the scene playing out before his eyes. "She said she's never seen anybody fight taking their medicine like you did."

Good grief, how many people knew about her little episode last night? "That's not being brave; that's being stupid."

"How come?"

"Because the medication is to help you get better." Mumbling to herself, she added, "And because the more you fight, the longer they give it to you."

"Then why did you fight them?"

"I don't know!" Shyanne hammered the spoon into the mushy ice cream, frustrated because she didn't know the answer herself.

Elroy watched her solemnly as though he wanted to understand how she felt. "Are you scared, Shyanne?" He stopped kicking his feet and became still.

Shyanne nodded her head. "Very scared, Elroy." Fear was nowhere near the right adjective to describe her feelings; not even anxiety qualified as a contender. Anguish was the emotion that seemed to be the most predominant—long, hopeless anguish.

It suddenly dawned on her that the young, six-year-old boy with whom she spoke wore baggy, rolled up nursing scrubs. Critiquing him with a careful glance, she stared at him, puzzled by his apparel. "Who sent you up here, Elroy?"

He shrugged as if it were no big deal. "Nobody. I knew you were lonely, and I brought you ice cream."

"So, do you work here?" It was a stupid question, asking a child if he was employed, but it was the only one she could think of to ask.

"No."

Shyanne raised her eyebrows in question, waiting for more detail, but Elroy just sat in the chair, happy and content. "Where did you get the uniform?"

"At the store."

Rubbing her temples with her fingers, Shyanne laughed in frustration. "This is ridiculous. A six-year-old 'nurse' works in the mental ward of the hospital! Maybe I am crazy."

"You're not crazy. Only crazy people don't know they're crazy."

Shyanne blinked several times to process his statement. "Could you repeat that, please? Slowly?"

"Crazy people don't know they're crazy."

"What makes you think that?"

"That's what my mom says. She's a doctor."

"Here, at this hospital?"

"Yep. I have to come here after school sometimes until she gets off work. The nurses let me help them with chores and stuff."

Shyanne sighed with relief. "That explains the miniature scrub uniform."

"How come you think you're crazy?"

"I'm in the mental ward of the hospital, Elroy. They don't put a person in here unless there's something really, really wrong with their brain."

"Maybe there's nothing wrong with your brain, Shyanne." Elroy began kicking his legs again. "Maybe it's your nerves."

"My nerves?" What could a young boy know about the nervous system?

"Well, you're not crazy, and you're not trying to do anything bad, like hurting yourself, so it has to be your nerves. My mom treats people with nerve problems a lot."

Shyanne looked at Elroy thoughtfully, her mind considering what he was saying. "But if it's just nerves, why am I in the mental ward?"

Elroy sat still for a moment, his legs coming to a rest from their kicking. He stared at the floor, deep in thought over Shyanne's question, his lips puckered together in sincere concentration. Finally, an inspiration occurred to him, and his eyes perked up again. "Maybe your nerves make you think you're crazy, and so, you act sad because you really think it's true!"

Shyanne opened her mouth to tell Elroy that what he said was impossible, but instead she closed it as something clicked in her mind. "Do you mean that nerves could be causing all my problems? Just nerves sending the wrong message through my body and telling it to panic or be depressed or feel sick? Nerves could do that?"

Elroy shrugged his shoulders again. "Maybe."

Shyanne leaned back against her pillow and stared at the wall, her lost hope slowly returning. It made sense, or at least some of it did. As a matter of fact, it was the only theory that seemed able to encompass all her symptoms.

Elroy hopped out of his chair, landing on the linoleum floor with a loud thud. "I have to go now. My mom likes to know where I am." He walked over to the side of Shyanne's bed and took the bowl that was half full of melted ice cream from her lap. "Are you done? I can take this back with the tray." He leaned back to the table and picked up the brown cafeteria tray.

"Yes, I'm done. Thank you, Elroy."

Elroy grinned sheepishly, embarrassed by the compliment.

Shyanne suppressed the urge to cling to him. She felt frozen with a sudden feeling of loss. She didn't want him to leave. Elroy had somehow, in that short time, brought back to her the hope she thought was lost forever. "Will you come back and visit me, Elroy?" He was just a little boy, and yet, he had helped her more in those few minutes than any doctor had been able to do in a year.

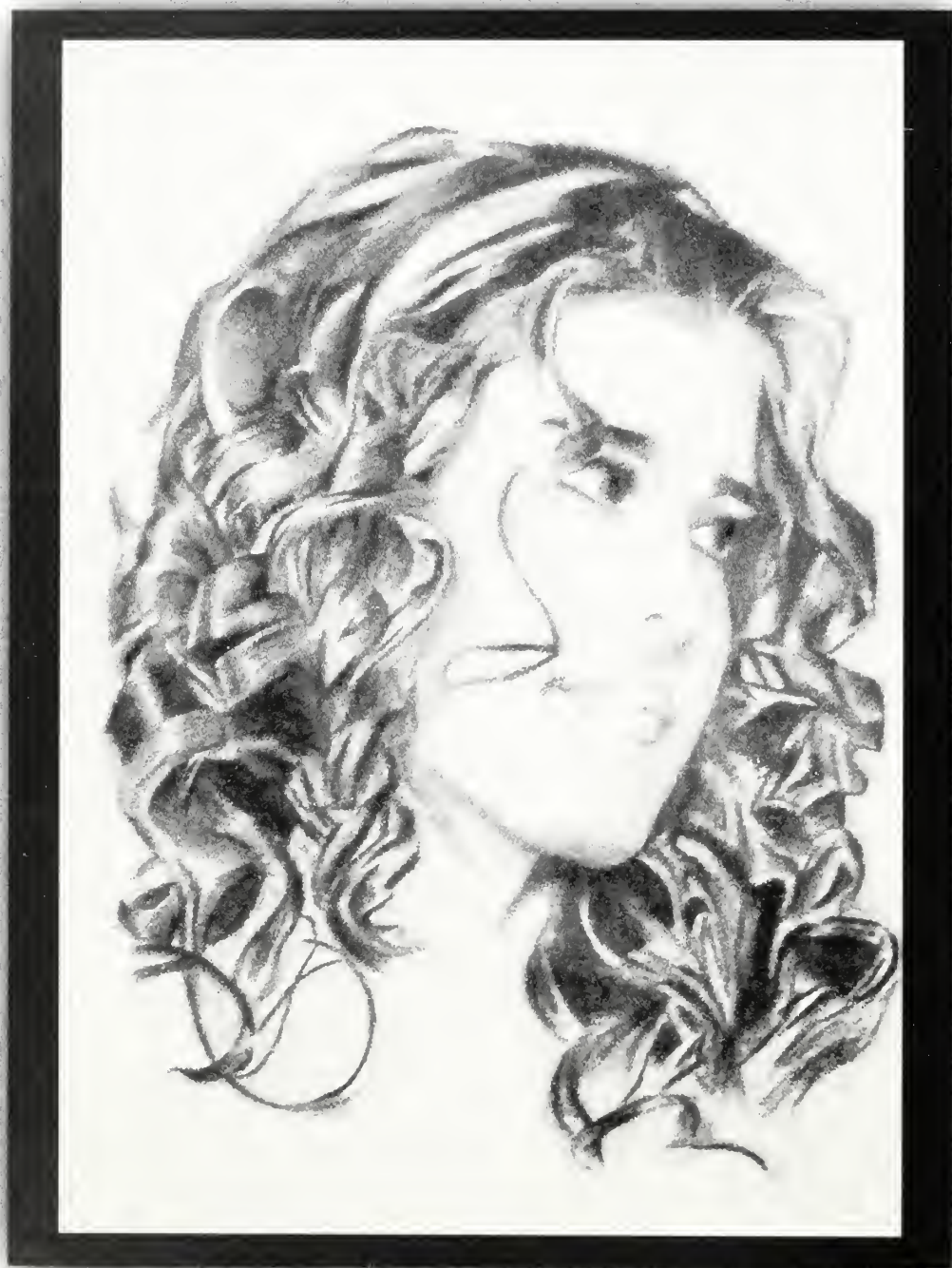
"Sure. Want me to bring more ice cream?"

Shyanne smiled. "That'd be great."

"Okay!" Elroy turned and walked to the door. Looking back with a gentle smile spread across his cute, innocent face, he said, "Bye, Shyanne." He waved and then turned, skipping out into the hall.

*Author's note:

The name *Elroy* has a deeper, more personal meaning. One of the names of God is *El Roi*, which means, "the God who sees." Elroy and *El Roi* are two separate names with two different meanings, but I liked the fact that they sound the same. Thus, the little boy who could "see" Shyanne's pain became Elroy.



Soledad

Harold M. Mateos-Avardo | Freshman | Anaheim, CA | Pencil 9"x12"

Roots

Christina Ivey | Sophomore | Lindale

You won't believe this,
And I'm almost afraid to admit it,
But I'm a natural blonde.

I know, I know,
It's hard to tell cause
I mask it so well
With my excellent
Taste in dye choices,
And my intellect
Which in no way
Could be associated with that
Of a blonde - but nevertheless,
That is what I am.

Attempting to ditch
The stereotype latching itself
Onto the world of blondes,
I fervently continue to
Keep my hair color from
Retaining normalcy at all costs.
Every six months or so
I moan at the sight of my roots,
Inching their way out—
Revealing my secret—
And make a mad dash to the store
To pick up the box that
Has the lady with the
Short, flippy red hair.
(I don't know the color name,
Just the chick on the box.)
The next hour is dedicated
To scrubbing that vile smelling
stuff
All through my hair;
Then sitting as still as possible,
Inhaling the fumes,

Unable to move without staining
The furniture, walls, or
whatever.

Finally, I get into the most
Uncomfortable position possible
(wedged between the tub and
the toilet),
Trying to rinse that gunk
Out of my hair.

To anyone else
This routine might seem
ridiculous,
But to someone who's faced
Ridicule from the time she was
young
Till the time she could do
Something about it,
It is a necessary evil.

But no more....

I come before you now
To confess that even though
I work so hard at covering it up,
I still have my blonde moments.
Today, at work,
I forgot my name while on the
phone...
Twice...,
Accidentally refilled the salt
shakers
With sugar
And didn't realize it till
After the lunch rush,
And misspelled "Special"
On the large board

Outside the restaurant
That everyone and their dog
Reads on the way to town

Sometimes I wish
They made a hair dye that
Completely changed your
internal
Chemical composition
'Cause trying to fix the outside
Isn't working anymore.
It seems no matter
How hard I try to cover them up,
My roots find a way to
Slither back out.

So I've decided
Not to fight it anymore—
If that means that I have
Doomed myself to a life
Filled with dumb-blond jokes,
So be it.
At least I won't be running
From my roots anymore.

How long does it take for
Grey hairs to show?
At least then I can blame
It all on senility.



Self Portrait

Nobody Knows

Asia Thomas | Freshman | Dallas

Nobody knows what I know,
Nor will they understand what I
feel.
How can they?
They've never been in my shoes,
Nor have they walked the path that
I have.
They may know Why the Caged Bird
Sings,
But I know the song that wails
through the cloudy skies from the
loneliness of a bound soul.

Nobody has seen what I've seen,
Nor will they comprehend the depth
of my visions.
How can they?
They've never been betrayed by
what they've seen
To make them look like fools in
plenty of company.
But I see the truth in lies and
deception,
And what is normal to you is really
a hologram of perfection made to
alter the human mind.

Nobody can do what I do,
Nor will they come close to the
standards set by A Raisin in the Sun.
How can they?
They've never had to overcome
life's trials with eyes wide shut,
And their heart oppressed by the
needs of the devil's rejects.
But in the midst of it all, Ali might
"float like a butterfly and sting
like a bee," but I am as graceful
as the ocean and as powerful as its
strongest storm.

Nobody can be who I am,
Nor will they ever be able to dissect
the complexity of a virtuous woman.
How can they?
They've never had to wade through
the black night,
Searching for an escape to the land
of nowhere.
But I made it through, even while
being struck down by the world's
wicked ways.

Nobody can become whom they do
not know.
They may know the hard exterior of
me,
But never have they felt the depth
of my soul.
They may sympathize with my
thoughts
But never understand the meaning.
They may hear my song
But never hear the words I am truly
singing.
No, nobody can be me.

Nobody



Heart

Jessica McIntyre | Freshman | Tyler | Digital Image 8.5" x 11"

Ugly Definition

Carter W. Maddox | Freshman | Chandler

i. Once, when the boy was little, he awoke to a day that poured into his bedroom from his window like water from a spout on a pitcher, making his floor illuminate with light in the middle and creep into shadow around its edges, driving the monsters and devils and demons back under the bed and into the closet and letting his dreams climb up the arch of sun that flowed from the spout into the air and into the world. A beautiful day, his mother would call it, that would later be remembered as the day he played God, as the day he would witness first hand the finality of death, as the day he would himself live all the while making another not. This day, this warm, bright day, the boy would learn the most negative definition of “man” the world has to offer—the definition that boys first discover when they realize they can hold fire on a leash. This definition, of course, is take, control, conquer, gloat, repeat, and it would be on this day that he, the young boy who is green like the grass and innocent like the blue sky, will discover the innate monster that lies within him, and he will never be the same.

ii. The day began with the sun and then led to the table where a man’s meal was laid out for him already. Three biscuits down and a half cup of gravy down and two sausage patties down and a glass of whole milk down, and the boy’s stomach bulged and his sides ached, but he had eaten an amount equivalent to what his father had, and the boy was satisfied. He leaned forward as he walked back to his room where the sunlight had now spread to the apexes of walls and floor and where monsters no longer had space or shadows in which to hide. He didn’t bother to flip a light switch as he walked in; the day offered enough light to illuminate even the closet, a notch in a wall covered by a door. Out of it he retrieved a pair of grey galoshes with red rubber soles and a red rubber heel and a jacket that looked just like his father’s, and another item—one he could play God with—one that was cold to the touch until it released its energy and then was red-hot to whatever felt its power. One that would teach him the ugly definition—take, control, conquer, gloat, repeat.

iii. A patch of cleared land, which had been sown with grass seed and infused with wild flowers—bluebonnets, mainly—outlined the perimeter of his house, but this patch was small: only enough width was allotted to provide six men to stand at an arm’s distance from each other and have the men on the end touch wood and house, respectively. When running, the little boy easily cleared the patch,

and he who was little and ignorant and green like the grass with the cold tool in his hand had the patch behind him in nine bounds. In the wood, he found himself once again in a shroud of night as if the arch had never come down that morning, and the monsters had never hidden under the bed, and the dreams had never escaped out the window. He found himself now being the one who was hiding from what things could be waiting for him, for he was the one who was little and green and meaty and tasty. He saw none of these things, though, but he knew if he did, he held the instrument that would rid the landscape of them, kill them, conquer them.

iv. A bird chirping. No monsters in the wood, but a bird chirping caught his ear first. This was not just any chirp; it was a loud chirp—one that suggested a belly full and one that pierced the ear, not distinctive like a whippoorwill but not generic like a mockingbird, either. Still, it drove nails into his drum and called them to it, like a siren in the water. CALL, CALL, CALL, it sang; CALL, CALL, CALL. Herein lay the boy's first discomfort: whatever it was, wherever it was, it was controlling him, for he had involuntarily cupped his hands and placed them over his ears like muffs, and he hated that he could not drive the sound out, that it drove itself in. Even in the mornings, he could rely on the sun to drive the monsters and devils and demons away—the sun provided that service—but now not even the sun could reach him, for overhead the leaves of trees were like the curtains that stayed closed until his mother pulled them open, so that when she did, the devils and demons and monsters were exorcized, driven into the apexes of wall and floor underneath the bed. Left to his own means, the boy who was young and green and meaty and tasty was conquered by this sound, but he knew what to do. He held the very tool, still cold, with which to do it.

v. And so he looked for the source. CALL, CALL, CALL, it sang and rang out through the forest, and he followed these CALLS through to a hollow of wood where sun finally touched the earth again, and the monsters and demons and devils were no longer around to torture him since they had to hide once again in the shadow that lived in corners and apexes of tree and grass instead of wall and floor. CALL, CALL, CALL, the bird sang out, and when he found it, he was no longer in the hollow but back in the dark where the monsters and demons and devils hid and where he was now shrouded in shadow. He found the source—blue and fat and with a yellow beak, and when his cold, slender, power went, he conquered, and it burst into an explosion of blood and feather, leaving no flesh behind, all disintegrated. It had sung its last CALL.

vi. But its babies stayed, and they TWEETED, and they TWITTED, and they opened their mouths up for food even though they knew they couldn't get any, for they had seen their mother burst like a firecracker and fall to the ground and could see her feathers join the wind and be whooshed away into the wood and into the darkness and behind the apex of tree and grass and with the monsters and demons and devils. The boy looked at this nest, saw the life of three more birds, and put his warm weapon down.

vii. Look at the boy the green boy who is green like grass he is snapping but his fingers his parents snapping It's the bird's necks that are snapping and he can't stop it because see the monster and demon and evil. Have taken the boy's hands and made him start snapping snapping snapping snapsnap snapsnap crack not TWEET OR TWITTER OR CALL, CALL, CALLLLL just snapsnap ssssnap and pop pop pop pop pop pop and he can't stop and can't stop and can't stomp stomponononononon that bird's body on the ground and stompstompstompstomp and BEAT BEAT BEAT that bird into the ground and beat that bird into the ground and stomp stomp and so stomppp and stompstomp and HE FEELS powerful and he feels powerful and feels powerful and wants to do it again and STOMP and STAND STOMP AND STAND and conquer conquer rrrran D STOMP AND STOMPA

viii. After he ran back to his house, into his room full of light, and later into a tub full of warm water in his parents' bathroom, his mother saw the trail of tracks that the red rubber soles with red rubber heels left behind on the carpet. Dammit, boy, she thought, and then saw his gun on the floor, too--red notch showing and even more red smeared on the barrel and stock, staining the wood and metal. She found his clothes in a pile in the space where the sun had struck the carpet that morning, clothes that were now the color of hummingbird food, only darker and drier and sicker. He was in the fiberglass tub in his parents' bathroom, and the water had grown the same color as his shirt and jeans and soles and heels, and it was the color of the birds' blood, and it was warm, and it was powerful, and so was he, and he had taken and controlled and conquered and was now showing the red to his mother, and he smiled at the same time that he cried salt tears stained with red because he knew that he would soon do it again--take, control, conquer, gloat, repeat, take, control, conquer, gloat, repeat, take, control, conquer, gloat, repeat, take, control, conquer, gloat, repeat, take, control, conqu....



Untitled

Sarah Meads | Sophomore | Tyler | 35mm / BW 8" x 10"

Glory Days

Christina Ivey | Sophomore | Lindale

He sits in the back
Of the room
At his desk,
Staring out the window,
Watching last period athletics.

It's May:
Long before they're expected
To kick a field goal,
Tackle their opponents,
Or run hard for that touchdown -
And yet, there they are—
Mechanically running the plays
And going through the motions
As if they had a game tomorrow.

Inside the classroom
The students are rowdy and noisy,
Anxiously waiting to escape
At the sound of the bell.
One student jumps up
And yells the punch line
Of a joke
That would make his mother's ears
shrivel
While boys whoop and holler
And girls blush and squeal.

Yet - He hears none of this -
Because he's out on the field.

Just a few years earlier,
It was he who was
Running the plays
Throwing the winning
touchdown,
Motivating the team
And the town.

He was supposed to go to
The best school,
Make it big,
And have his face
Plastered on the billboard,
Welcoming tourists into his
hometown.

But then...
She came...

And while they both
Decided to wait for marriage,
Neither one of them
Could wait for love
And along came Junior.

Oh, he claims they're both the
Best things that ever
Happened to him
(and by his actions,
he shows it).

But he still stares
Out his window
Everyday
During last period athletics;
And while the bell rings
And the students make a
Mad rush for the door,
He's drawn in to the moments of
his Glory days
And thinks about
What could have been.

Blank Pages

Dawn Trammell | Freshman | Quitman

*Dedicated to the memory of Brandon Trammell,
December 2000 - December 2006.*

A small existence so short,
Five little years.
Blank pages of life,
Never to be written.
Distraught parents,
Longing for a second chance.
What of the blank pages?
They cry.
Kindergarten graduation,
Pee-wee football,
Science projects,
First job,

First car,
First kiss,
High school graduation,
College football games,
First apartment,
Marriage,
Children,
Grandchildren.
The blank pages
Of his life
Will remain blank,
Never to be written.



I'm Below Him

Michael Stephen | Sophomore | Tyler | 35mm / BW 8" x 10"

Charlie Parker

Alexander Croft | Sophomore | Midlothian

The smoke filled the room is like the evening fog
that rolls into night.
Light and shadow, traditional enemies,
all paired together in the tiny room.
The lights were low, the hopes were high:
Five minutes to show time.

Anxiously I waited while the band was warming up;
Trumpet, piano, cornet, sax, drums, the jivest
Instruments, creating an ensemble of one:
Four minutes to show time.

Glancing around the club, I am not the only glamorous one.
Pop to my left and Granddaddy to my right,
I feel younger than a newborn cat.
I know all the songs, "Scrapple from the Apple,"
"Thriving on a Riff," and "Barbados."
Anxious now: three minutes to show time.

The simple staccato sounds of the saxophone
sinfully swinging the blues.
Tickling the piano's ebonies and ivories,
the boss brass sounds of the trumpet and cornet,
Banging the drums, what a wonderful sight!
The time ticks by like New Year's Eve in Times Square;
now: two minutes to show time.

The musicians enter the stage, a trinity of heart beats.
The lights dim like before the movie show.
Here he comes, my hero, my favorite musician:
"Jazz Cats and Dolls, Ladies and Gents—The Bird!"



Lantern of Light

Alberto Quiñones | Freshman | Tyler | Graphite 18"x24"



Queen

Kim Fate | Freshman | Tyler | 35mm / BW 8" x 10"

Zoo of the Strange and Unusual

Dawn Trammell | Freshman | Quitman

Zoë Mason thought that she was untouchable. An executive for a large plastics company, she had it all—a beautiful home, a super-charged sports car, and a hefty bank account to go along with it. No family to tie her down. She had worked for it and worked hard, fighting her way up the ladder past a number of others. It was their own fault if she passed them up. They should have worked harder. She was the Wonder Woman of the plastics industry. She laughed as she pictured herself in red, white, and blue spandex. Her only problem was that she was wound tighter than a Timex. She was looking too gaunt, too fragile. She needed to relax, chill out and have some fun for a change.

Today was Saturday, and the weather was beautiful. It was something that she usually didn't pay too much attention to, not being one to stop and smell the roses very often. The sun was shining as if it were about to explode. The sky was a gorgeous color of robin's egg blue with a few fluffy clouds hovering overhead as if they were floating down a blue river. She was driving with the top down, and the wind was wafting through her long brown hair.

On this particular occasion, Zoë was driving by an old lot just outside of town and noticed that there was a traveling carnival being set up. That was just what the doctor ordered.

Later that evening she decided to come back and pay the carnival a visit. As she drove into the makeshift parking lot that was actually an old field where local kids played baseball, she noticed the myriad of sounds and lights coming from the cavalcade of the various attractions. She could hear the laughter of children and the sound of a calliope coming from the merry-go-round and the various dings, chimes, and bells coming from Game Alley. There were lights of a variety of colors, blinking and cascading in every direction. As she approached the Midway, she could smell the multitude of odors coming from the concession stands. The odor was a mixture of deep-fried corn dogs, popcorn, funnel cakes, and smoked turkey legs. Why does such disgusting food seem so appealing in this setting, she wondered?

After playing a few games and riding a couple of the tamer rides, she headed for Freak Town. It was the part of the carnival that displayed oddities and strange animals. Maybe she could find some ridiculous attractions that would give her a laugh. Walking past the various booths, she noticed a sign that read "Zoo of the Strange and Unusual." She wasn't sure why, but she had an overwhelming urge to enter the small, makeshift building. As she drew closer, she could hear the barker out front, making his pitch. He was a short, round little man, maybe in his early thirties. He had a bush of curly blonde hair that stuck out from under the edges of his bowler hat, round little eyes, and a large cleft in his chin. When he smiled, his appearance seemed almost boyish. He was shouting about the fine attractions that were held within the building. Only five tickets and well worth it, he pleaded. For some reason, she was oddly drawn to this booth. The little man seemed to be speaking to her and her alone. She walked up, paid her five tickets, and wandered through the entrance.

The door slammed shut behind her with an ominous clap followed by a clicking sound that sounded a lot like a padlock being closed. She laughed at the scare tactic meant to put her in the mood. The lighting was very dim, probably to hide the fake prosthetics and bad make up, thought Zoë. It did, however, give the place a creepy feel. There was a long, thin hallway with a dirt floor that seemed to go on forever. The walls were made of plywood and painted with various scenes. There was a row of booths that had been built down the left side of the hall that contained diverse attractions. The front of each booth was covered in Plexiglas, so that Zoë could see what was contained inside without fear of exposure to it. Or maybe it was to protect the oddities from the crowd. She wasn't sure which. There was an odd smell that seemed to be a mixture of dirt and sweat and sawdust.

As she drew near the first booth, she could see that there was a man inside. He was standing upright with chains holding both of his arms above his head. His feet were shackled to keep him from running away. She couldn't see anything strange or unusual about him other than the fact that he looked strangely familiar. In fact, he looked too familiar. He looked exactly like her Uncle Frank. As he looked into her eyes, his became wide with fear, and she realized that it was her Uncle Frank! He had tried to molest her as a child when she stayed the night with her cousin Mattie. He had apparently been molesting Mattie for years and wanted fresh meat. Zoë was lucky enough to have been very forceful with her objections, and he took Mattie with him instead. She tried to tell what happened, but no one would believe her. As a teenager, Mattie had committed suicide.

Zoë felt as if she were in a trance. On the front of the Plexiglas window was a large red plastic button with the word PAYBACK written across it. Looking at Uncle Frank brought back all of the anger and frustration that Zoë had felt at not being able to help her cousin. Without another thought, she reached down and pressed the button. Uncle Frank stiffened and then bucked wildly as he screamed. Strangely enough, she could see him scream, but she couldn't hear it. The booths must be soundproof. As best she could guess, Uncle Frank had just been shocked. With satisfaction, she pressed the button again. The bastard deserved it for torturing his only daughter into committing suicide. He bucked, screamed again, and then went limp. He had passed out.

Startled back to reality, Zoë felt a moment of panic. What had just taken place? A trick of the mind? No more for her, she decided. She turned around and headed for the door to get out, but the door was locked. She banged on the door and screamed to be let out, but to no avail. Suddenly Zoë realized that she could no longer hear the sounds of the carnival. She got it now. She must have been hypnotized into this—given some sort of post-hypnotic suggestion that caused her to make this up as she went along. After all, who else could have possibly known about Uncle Frank? Okay, maybe she would just play along for a while.

With trepidation she inched her way down the hall toward the next booth. In it was Cindy Robinson. Cindy was a real estate agent in town who had sold Zoë a house with a bad foundation. Cindy had known about the problem and had paid off the inspector to cover it up. Anyone could be bought, right? It had cost Zoë \$15,000

to fix the problem, and she took a loss when she sold the house. This is great therapy, thought Zoë. She pressed the button and held it until she could almost smell Cindy's hair burning. That was her imagination, too, she thought, but it was a nice touch.

The next booth contained her parents. Her father had beaten her into submission as a child on numerous occasions and had even sent her to the hospital a couple of times. Her alcoholic mother had covered it all up and allowed it to continue. Zoë let herself enjoy pressing the button this time.

In the next booth was John Kemsey. He worked with her at Century Plastics. He had slept with her to get ahead and then dumped her. That had hurt. Zoë had thought that he had loved her and that they were headed for marriage. Live and learn, thought Zoë as she pressed the button.

Booth after booth contained people who had done her wrong in her lifetime. She was reaching the end of the hallway when she saw an empty booth. She wondered who was supposed to be in there, and she started feeling light-headed. The room was swaying in a maddening, sea-sickness kind of way. Then Zoë fainted.

Zoë awakened feeling cramped and bruised. She was hanging from her wrists by chains attached to a wall. In horror, she realized that she was in one of the booths in the Zoo of the Strange and Unusual. She automatically started thinking of all of the people that she had wronged in her life. There were the people whom she had stabbed in the back to get ahead at work. There was the nerdy kid at school whom she had made fun of until he had a nervous breakdown—what was his name? Jeremy? What about her friend, Anna Coursey, whose husband she had slept with? Now that she thought about it, there was quite a list.

With sudden terror, she could hear someone coming down the hall toward her. She realized that it was the barker she had seen at the beginning of the attraction. "You realize that this was a test, right?" he said with a smirk. "You could have forgiven or offered mercy to all of the people who had wronged you, and you would have been set free to continue the rest of your life. But now you will pay for your sins in the same way that you saw fit to punish them for theirs." He turned and walked away laughing as Anna Coursey came wandering down the dark hallway.



Serenity

Rachel Earl Felipe | Sophomore | Manila, Philippines | Digital Photo 8" x 10"

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Art and Photography Selections

Harold M. Mateos-Alvarado
Freshman | Anaheim, CA
Soledad | Pencil 9"x12"

April C. Arms
Freshman | Flint
Leaf Abstract | 35mm/BW 8"x10"

Garret Blackmon
Freshman | Frankston
Hanging By a Thread | Acrylic 23"x30"

Brandie Covington
Freshman | Tyler
Looking Down | Digital Photo 4"x6"

Kim Fate
Freshman | Tyler
Queen | 35mm/BW 8"x10"

Rachel Earl Felipe
Sophomore | Manila, Philippines
Serenity | Digital Photo 8"x10"

Rachel Earl Felipe
Sophomore | Manila, Philippines
Abusive | Acrylic 11"x14"

Rachel Earl Felipe
Sophomore | Manila, Philippines
Granny's Chair | Digital Photo 8"x10"

Matt Hogan
Sophomore | Tyler
Quietness | Digital Photo 8"x10"

Cierra McGuckie
Sophomore | Celeste
Self Portrait | Charcoal 18"x24"

Jessica McIntyre
Freshman | Tyler
End of Summer | 35mm/BW 8"x10"

Jessica McIntyre
Freshman | Tyler
Heart | Digital Image 8.5"x11"

Sarah Meads
Sophomore | Tyler
Untitled | 35mm/BW 8"x10"

Alberto Quiñones
Freshman | Tyler
Lantern of Light | Graphite 18"x24"

Michael Stephen
Sophomore | Tyler
I'm Below Him | 35mm/BW 8"x10"

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Freshman | Tyler
In Transit

Alexander Croft
Sophomore | Midlothian
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Roots

Brian C. Keese
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Mom ans Pops

Amy Kruzel
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Ugly Definition

Sheila Sulser
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Free the Ghost

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Angela Weiss
Sophomore | Frankston
Memorial

Tyler Junior College
Spring 2007